

Wiltshire County Council

Whistleblowing Policy

Introduction

1. Wiltshire County Council is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability. Our whistleblowing policy supports this commitment. It gives employees, elected members and others with genuine concerns about malpractice or wrongdoing in the council a way to voice those concerns without fear of victimization.
2. Often it is those closest to an organisation who realise that there is something wrong. Sometimes people are reluctant to act upon their concerns because they think that they are being disloyal, or because they are afraid that they might be victimized if they speak up.
3. The purpose of this policy is to provide you with the help and support you need to speak up and be confident that you can do so safely. We will take your concerns seriously and ensure that they are dealt with promptly and fairly.

How to raise a concern

4. There is a freephone number you can call to raise your concerns. The number is:
5. The person answering your call will take your name and a telephone number on which you can be contacted at a time and place that are convenient for you. The call will be referred to one of the following people:
 - Chief Executive
 - Monitoring Officer
 - Chief Auditor
 - Corporate Standards Manager
6. Within 48 hours one of them will contact you to arrange to meet you to discuss your concerns. Before the meeting, it would be helpful if you write down what you consider the problem to be, giving names, dates and places where possible. If there are any other documents that you think might be helpful, please try to bring these with you.

Anonymous allegations

7. You are encouraged to raise your concern in person, because concerns that are expressed anonymously are difficult to investigate. However, the council

will exercise its discretion in deciding whether to investigate an anonymous allegation. The factors taken into account will include:

- the seriousness of the issues raised;
- the credibility of the allegation and;
- the likelihood of being able to confirm the allegation from attributable sources.

How we will respond

8. After your initial meeting, the Monitoring Officer will arrange for discreet initial enquiries to be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and if so, what form it should take.
9. We will write to you within 10 days of your initial meeting to:
 - acknowledge that your concern has been received;
 - outline our understanding of what the issues are and;
 - indicate how we propose to deal with the matter.
10. If the Monitoring Officer decides that it is appropriate for an investigation to be carried out, this will usually be done by the Corporate Standards Manager or the Chief Auditor. However, it may sometimes be necessary for a concern to be referred to the police, an external auditor, or for it to be the subject of an independent enquiry. In addition, where it is established that the complaint involves issues of bullying or unlawful discrimination, it will be necessary to involve Human Resources. Investigations will never be conducted by staff working in the department about which the allegation has been made, nor by anyone in your line management structure.
11. If an investigation is carried out, you will always be informed of the final outcome. It might not be possible to give you full details of the outcome if it contains personal details of a third party, because we have a duty to protect personal information under the Data Protection Act.

How will the council treat whistleblowers?

12. If you make an allegation in good faith but it is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against you. If you knowingly make malicious allegations, disciplinary action may be taken against you.
13. Disciplinary action will be taken against any member of staff who tries to stop another employee from raising a concern or who is responsible for any act of retribution or victimisation against an employee who raises a concern.
14. If you raise a concern, you will be given the opportunity to feed back any issues or problems you may have experienced as a result. This will take place outside your line management structure. The purpose of this is to ensure that employees who have raised concerns in good faith do not suffer as a result.